

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, RP

SUBJECT: ALLEGED FOREIGN (US) SUPPORT OF THE OPPOSITION

REF: MANILA 3193

1. SUMMARY. THE GOP ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN (I.E., US) SUPPORT TO THE OPPOSITION COME AT A TIME OF RENEWED PUBLIC TENSION IN THE US-RP RELATIONSHIP. A PRIMARY REASON FOR THE GOP LINE MAY BE TO GET THE US TO LAY OFF THE AQUINO CASE. IF THE OPPOSITION RESPONDS IN KIND, THERE COULD BE A GENERAL RAISING OF THE ANTI-US DECIBEL COUNT IN THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT. END SUMMARY.

2. IT IS SELDOM EASY TO ESTIMATE WITH ACCURACY WHAT MOTIVATES THE MARCOSES AND THEIR AGENTS TO FASHION A PARTICULAR PUBLIC LINE, ESPECIALLY ONE INVOLVING THE US. AS NOTED REFTEL, THE THEME OF FOREIGN SUPPORT OF THE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN CREEPING INTO THE GUIDED MEDIA OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS. THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS NOW PLACED HIS OWN CHCHET ON THIS THEME GIVES IT A NEW AND PERHAPS WORRISOME DIMENSION.

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3. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, THE US ENJOYED A RELATIVE HONEYMOON WITH THE PHILIPPINE MEDIA DURING MOST OF 1977 AND ESPECIALLY FOLLOWING THE ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADOR NEWSOM IN EARLY NOVEMBER. THE BLOOM CAME QUICKLY OFF THE ROSE, HOWEVER, IN JANUARY WHEN THE SPATE OF CORRUPTION REPORTS, LED BY THE WESTINGHOUSE NUCLEAR REACTOR STORY, BEGAN TO APPEAR. THE GOP RESPONDED PREDICTABLY AND

SHARPLY TO THESE REPORTS, BUT ITS ESSENTIAL TARGET WAS THE "BIASED WESTERN MEDIA."

4. HUMAN RIGHTS ALSO CAME TO THE FORE IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY WITH THE VISIT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN AND THE RELEASE OF THE DEPARTMENT'S ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT TO THEMCONGRESS. AGAIN THE GOP REACTED STRONGLY BUT THIS TIME THE FOCUS OF GOP IRE WAS THE US GOVERNMENT. ROMUALDEZ FAMILY COLUNIST GRANADA RESURRECTED HIS OLD THEME OF THE PRESENCE OF UNSYMPATHETIC AND ILL-INFORMED STAFFERS IN THE EMBASSY (HOLDOVERS FROM THE SULLIVAN REGIME). ONE COLUMNIST SUGGESTED THAT AMBASSADOR NEWSOM'S CREDIBILITY MIGHT BE QUESTIONED, SINCE THE AMBASSADOR HAD ASSERTED THE US WAS NOT THE WORLD'S SCOREKEEPER ON HUMAN RIGHTS WHILE THE OPPOSITE WAS CLEARLY TRUE.

5. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF EMERGING PUBLIC TENSION IN THE US-RP RELATIONSHIP, IT WAS NOT A LARGE STEP FOR THE GOP TO SUGGEST THAT THE US WAS SUPPORTING PHILIPPINE OPPOSITIONISTS. THE ADVENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND THE SENSITIVE ROLE OF AQUINO IN THAT CAMPAIGN PROVIDED THE STIMULUS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS LATEST THEME.

6. WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN WHETHER THIS GOP PUBLIC FORAY
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IS LARGELY TACTICAL OR WHETHER IF REFLECTS A SUBSTANTIVE CONCERN OVER PERCEIVED US POLICIES. PERHAPS A BLENDING OF BOTH. PARANOIA IN MALACANANG IS NEVER FAR BELOW THE SURFACE, AND IT IS QUITE CONCEIVABLE THAT HE, AND PARTICULARLY SHE, ACTUALLY DO PERCEIVE A US ROLE IN SUPPORT OF THE OPPOSITION. AND OUR EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF AN EARLY DISPOSITION OF THE AQUINO CASE PERHAPS FED THIS PARANOIA.

7. ON THE TACTICAL LEVEL MARCOS MAY HAVE A NUMBER OF OBJECTIVES IN MIND. FOR EXAMPLE, HE MAY BE SEEKING TO TAR THE OPPOSITION WITH THE US BRUSH BEFORE THE OPPOSITION HAS A CHANCE TO DO THE SAME TO HIM. WHETHER THIS IS A WISE GOP TACTIC MAY BE QUESTIONABLE, GIVEN THE PRESUMED GENERALLY PRO-US OUTLOOK OF THE ELECTORATE. IT IS ALSO IRONIC FOR MARCOS TO CHARGE AQUINO WITH COMMUNIST CONNECTIONS WHILE SUGGESTING HE IS IN THE US POCKET.

8. HOWEVER, A PRIMARY REASON FOR THE NEW THEME MAY WELL BE TO GET THE US TO DROP THE AQUINO CASE, AT LEAST FOR THE DURATION OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. MARCOS

HAS DECIDED NOT TO RELEASE AQUINO TO CAMPAIGN. HE
WOULD LIKE THAT DECISION TO REST WITHOUT USG IMPORTUNING.

9. WE DOUBT THAT THIS GOP THEME OF US SUPPORT FOR THE
OPPOSITION HAS HAD ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ELECTORATE
OR POSES ANY REAL THREAT TO THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.
WE ARE CONCERNED HOWEVER THAT THE OPPOSITION MIGHT RESPOND
IN KIND TO FURTHER GOP DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN INTER-
VENTION THEME. ANY SUCH RAISING OF THE ANTI-US DECIBEL
COUNT WOULD BE AN UNWELCOME PRELUDE TO THE VISIT
OF THE VICE PRESIDENT.
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